



## Asparaginase (Elspar<sup>®</sup>)

*At the Clinical Center referred to as asparaginase (a-SPAR-a-gin-ase).*

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**How Given:** Intramuscularly (by injection into the muscle) and intravenously (by vein).

**Drug Action:** Asparaginase interferes with protein building blocks. Cancer cells need these building blocks for growth.

**Side Effects:**

1. Nausea and vomiting can occur within 4 to 6 hours after treatment.
2. Weight loss can occur.
3. A low-grade fever (less than 101.3 °F or 38.5 °C) or chills can occur within 24 hours after receiving the drug. Talk to your doctor or nurse about using medication for the control of low-grade fever while receiving asparaginase.
4. Allergic reactions can occur.
5. Painless reddening can occur at the injection site.
6. Fatigue, sleepiness, and confusion can occur.
7. Asparaginase can affect your pancreas and liver. Tests will be done to monitor for this effect.

**Special Instructions:**

1. Tell your nurse **immediately** if you have itching, hives, rash, changes in breathing, or if you feel dizzy.
2. Do not take aspirin or aspirin-containing products unless prescribed by your NIH doctor.

### 3. Call your NIH doctor or nurse if you

- have swelling or pain at the injection site
- are unable to drink for more than 1 day or unable to eat for more than 2 days after treatment
- have pain in your abdomen
- are very thirsty and need to empty your bladder frequently
- have yellowing of your eyes or skin, itching, or dark urine
- have any unusual bleeding or bruising



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Living with Cancer Chemotherapy Series  
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